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SUBJECT: TFLE01: SINIORA CONVOKES DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO
DENOUNCE ISRAELI CAMPAIGN, CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) In a terse but emotionally-tinged 7/19 address to the diplomatic corps, Prime Minister Siniora demanded an immediate end to hostilities between Hizballah and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), a lifting of the Israeli naval blockade, and delivery of urgently-needed humanitarian assistance. He blamed Israeli retaliatory attacks for having inflicted "immeasurable" losses, and called for a redoubling of the international commitment to Lebanon. End summary.

CABINET -- MINUS HIZBALLAH MEMBER -- IN ATTENDANCE

¶2. (SBU) Prime Minister Siniora convoked all chiefs of mission of the diplomatic corps to the Grand Serail on the evening of July 19. Siniora arrived, once chiefs of mission and others were assembled, accompanied by nearly the entire Cabinet. A noticeable exception was Mohammad Fneish, the minister of power and water resources and the Cabinet's sole card-carrying member of Hizballah. Trad Hamadeh, the minister of labor and the Cabinet's non-card-carrying Hizballah supporter, was present.

CEASE FIRE, LIFT BLOCKADE, DELIVER ASSISTANCE

¶3. (U) Siniora read a prepared address to the chiefs of mission, in which he called for an immediate cease-fire between Hizballah and the IDF, the lifting of Israel's blockade of the Lebanese coast, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those parts of Lebanon, "my war ravaged country," affected by current conflict. (Note: Post has e-mailed the text to NEA/ELA-Lebanon desk and Task Force One).

ADDING UP THE COSTS SO FAR

¶4. (U) The past week of conflict had led to "immeasurable" losses in Lebanon, Siniora said. Some 300 people had been killed, and 1,000 more had been injured. By his estimate, more than 500,000 people had been internally displaced. The problem was further compounded by overwhelmed hospitals and dwindling supplies of food and medicine, he said.

¶5. (U) Siniora also called attention to the shelling of facilities of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the Joint Security Force (an amalgam of the LAF and gendarmerie charged

with patrolling southern Lebanon), the civil defense, and the UN. "The country has been torn to shreds," he said. "Can the international community stand by while such callous retribution by the State of Israel is inflicted on us?"

¶6. (U) Regarding Israeli attacks, Siniora asked, rhetorically, "Is this what the international community calls self defense? Is this the price we pay for aspiring to build our democratic institutions? Is this the message to send to the country of diversity, freedom and tolerance?"

CALL FOR REDOUBLED COMMITMENT TO LEBANON

¶7. (U) Referring to the international support shown for Lebanese sovereignty after the February 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Siniora asked (and repeated for emphasis), "You want to support the government of Lebanon?" "No government can survive on the ruins of a nation," he added.

¶8. (U) Siniora concluded by telling the assembled diplomats, "I hope you will not let us down." The event, having lasted less than a quarter of an hour, then concluded.

FELTMAN